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ABSTRACT

The vocational interest patterns of young unwed mothers were investigated by comparing the scores of a sample of unwed mothers with percentile averages from a national norm group. The interest differences of mothers who gave up their babies and mothers who kept their babies were also examined. Subjects were 53 young unwed mothers enrolled in a residential-type educational program in a family institute. Each participant was administered the Kuder Preference Record-Vocational. When compared to the national norm group, the subjects were above average on the Outdoor, Artistic, and Social Service scales. Young women who kept their babies scored higher on the Social Service scale and lower on the Scientific scale than those who gave up their babies. (Author/HLM)

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The Vocational Interests of Young Unwed Mothers

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Young unwed mothers were above average on the Kuder Preference Record on the Outdoor, Artistic and the Social Service Scales. Young women who kept their babies were higher on the Social Service Scale and lower on the Scientific Scale than those who gave up their babies. Implications for vocational counseling are provided.

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The Vocational Interests of Young Unwed Mothers

Despite the increase in legalized abortions and use of contraception the annual illegitimate birthrate among teenagers remains about 400,000 (National Center for Health Statistics, 1977). Although there is a growing body of general information about unwed mothers (Giel and Kidd, 1965) and comparative studies of unwed mothers who keep or give up their babies (Horn & Turner, 1976; Vincent, 1961) little information has been reported about the vocational interests of young unwed mothers.

Much of the counseling and educational emphasis with unwed mothers in residential programs focuses upon neonatal care, child development, nutritional and homemaking skills, and psychological and social adjustment. Less emphasis is placed on vocational exploration, career preparation, and job-seeking skills despite the reality that many of these young women will be forced to be a working single parent. Nationally less than 10 per cent of unwed mothers marry the father of their baby and they frequently find themselves faced with an employment decision in order to support themselves and their baby or join welfare programs which will again emphasis eventual employment. And, for the young women who give up their babies for adoption immediate employment or further career education becomes even more pressing.

What are the vocational interest patterns of these young unwed mothers? The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) compare a sample of young unwed mothers vocational interests with percentile averages of the national norm group and; (2) to determine if interest differences exist between young unwed mothers who keep or give up their babies.

SAMPLE AND METHOD

The sample consisted of 53 young unwed mothers who were enrolled on the average 6-7 weeks in a residential type educational program in a family institute location in the upper midwest during the period 1972-76. The average age of the participates was 17 including 20 per cent who were less than 15 years of age. Over 70 per cent listed a Lutheran or Catholic religious preference and 90 per cent were Caucasian. About 60 per cent were classified as middle class. Thirty four of these young women (64 per cent) made the final decision to keep their babies. All participants were administered the Kuder Preference Record - Vocational (Kuder, 1960) as part of a battery of tests and inventories when they entered the program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 compares the Kuder interest test data for the total sample, and subsamples of the young women who kept or gave up their babies and percentile averages compared with the national norm group (Kuder, 1954). As a total group they were above the 60 percentile of the national norm group on the Outdoor, Artistic, and Social Service scales and below the 40 percentile on the Scientific, Literary, and Musical Scales. The group of young women who kept their babies exceeded the 60th percentile of the national norm group on the Outdoor, Persuasive, Artistic and Social Service Scales and were below the 40th percentile on the Scientific, Literary, and Musical Scales. In comparison, the group of young women who released their babies for adoption recorded means above the 60th percentile of the national norm group on the Outdoor and Artistic Scales and were below the 40th percentile on the Literary Scale. The two subgroups recorded the greatest

differences in interests on the Scientific and Social Service scales with the women who released their babies 16 percentile points higher on the Scientific scale but 17 percentile points lower on the Social Service Scale.

As a total group the table indicates that the women were at the 71st percentile on artistic interests but only at the 29th percentile on Literary interests. The women who kept their babies had highest interests recorded on the Social Service Scale (75th percentile) and lowest on the Literary Scale (26th percentile). In contrast, the women who released their babies for adoption scored highest on the Outdoor and Artistic Scales (72nd percentile each) and recorded their lowest interest on the Literary Scale (34th percentile).

An individual analysis showed that 85 percent of the total group had a well differentiated interest profile with at least one interest scale above the 84th percentile. A comparison of the two subgroups showed that all of the women who gave up their babies had at least one high (84th percentile or higher) interest scale compared to 70 per cent of the young women who retained their babies. None of the young women in either group had a flat profile with all scores below the 50th percentile suggesting these young women had begun to crystallize and differentiate their interests.

What implications for vocational counseling and guidance with young unwed mothers can be drawn from the finding of this study?

First, the vocational interests of these young women seem to be well differentiated and indicate a readiness for career decision-making and career committment. Perhaps the press of imminent self-support and employment has promoted a quicker progression of career development, a finding consistent with Ginzberg's (1951) conclusion that girls often proceed through the career steps faster than boys because of a perceived marriage -

career dichotomy.

Secondly, these young unwed mothers showed some differences in vocational interests from women in general that may require special career counseling emphasis. Over one fourth of the total group had their highest interests in nontraditional outdoor and mechanical areas while less than 10 per cent had their highest interest in such traditional areas as clerical and social services. High artistic interests present another challenge of locating immediate jobs at the career entry level which require less than high school education and no technical level training.

School counselors should be well informed about the unique vocational interests of this growing population. Counselors may be most helpful in motivating these young women to continue their education through regular school enrollment, correspondence courses, or adult education. Additionally, the press for immediate employment along with continued education can be aided by providing job-seeking skills and training and making transitional referrals to employment service agencies for such job service programs as WIN II and CETA. For those who keep their babies and remain in school the counselor can work closely with the home economics teacher to build a sound program of continued child care information.

Finally, vocational counseling services will need to be the very best with this population since "the risk of being unemployed is 1.4 times greater for teen age mothers and they are 4.6 times more likely to be on welfare than their 20-24 years old counterparts." (Guidance Viewpoint, 1978).

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Table 1

Kuder Preference Record - Vocational
Scores for the Unwed Mothers Groups

	Kuder Scales	Total Group N=53 mean	%*	Kept Baby N=34 mean	SD	%	Released Baby N=19 Mean	SD	%
1.	Outdoor	40.6	67	39.8	15.8	64	42.0	16.3	72
2.	Mechanical	26.3	50	26.7	8.2	56	25.6	5.9	52
3.	Computational	21.8	45	21.0	8.1	41	23.4	7.3	51
4.	Scientific	27.7	31	26.2	9.6	27	30.6	12.0	43
5.	Persuasive	38.6	56	39.6	10.4	61	36.8	14.0	49
6.	Artistic	33.3	71	33.2	10.3	71	33.6	9.2	72
7.	Literary	16.0	29	15.4	5.3	26	17.0	6.6	34
8.	Musical	12.6	38	11.8	6.7	34	13.8	4.6	45
9.	Social Service	53.8	61	57.7	10.5	75	51.9	16.5	56
10.	Clerical	55.5	45	54.7	14.7	44	57.0	16.2	49

* % represents a comparison with national norm group